

Imran Ayub

Sindh govt imposes ban on plastic bags, urges people to start using cloth bags

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Thursday announced a ban on plastic bags across the province in a third such move taken to protect the environment, which, unfortunately, had never met any success in earlier attempts.

This time the announcement came amidst much media fanfare and huge claims at a press conference addressed by Barrister Murtaza Wahab, spokesperson for the government of Sindh, who also holds the portfolio of CM's adviser for environment and climate change. Mr Wahab said the recent ban was different from the past ones as it was imposed across the province.

Before making it effective, he said, the provincial government would run a massive campaign to convince consumers as well as traders about the benefits of such a step.

The decision to take effect from Oct 1

"The Sindh government will be enforcing a complete ban on plastic bags throughout the province with effect from October 1," he said. "The decision has been taken by the provincial environment department. The provincial government has simultaneously kicked off an awareness campaign about the harms of using plastic bags and in connection with this drive, cloth-made bags have been distributed among people of Karachi to encourage their use."

The move from the Sindh government came days after the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam had told senators attending the meeting of the Standing Committee on Climate Change that using polythene bags would be banned in Islamabad from Aug 14 and the provinces would be informed of the policy so they could legislate for themselves in this regard.

The provincial government spokesperson said that the previous bans had never been imposed across the province.

Secondly, Barrister Wahab added that the provincial government would use the gap between today's announcement and date of implementation to convince the people about the use of bags other than of plastic and polythene.

"We have more than 50 days in which we would campaign to make this ban effective," he said. "We would reach out to people in every city and district to make our point. It's in everyone's interest and we firmly believe that the people will appreciate the government move and play their role to protect our environment. We have to move now before it's too late."

He said the Sindh government on one hand was expecting positive response from the people of the province and on the other devising strict measures under which after the Oct 1 deadline, the violators of the ban would face legal proceedings.

When asked about the negative impact on the business of certain industries producing such bags and offering employment to hundreds of people, he said some issues demanded immediate moves for the larger interest.

“In the days to come we would definitely move to the industry and talk to them as well. There is always a solution to any problem and we hope that our business community would sort out the issues in larger interest of the province and its environment,” added Barrister Wahab.

CM’s message

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah in a video message urged the public to avoid using plastic bags as they were a key element in creating pollution.

He said that the government would encourage the use of cloth-made or paper bags and appealed to the masses to join the campaign.